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MY QUEEN

MARION MARLOWE IN CLEVELAND
OR THE MYSTERY OF THE RED ROSE
BY GRACE SHIRLEY

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MY QUEEN
A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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MARION MARLOWE IN CLEVELAND;

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLOOD-RED ROSE.

By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASH NOTE.

"Oh, Alma!"

"Yes, dear!"

"Will you just listen to this! It is the most extraordinary 'mash note' I ever received!"

"And you have been the recipient of all sorts and kinds, Marion; but do hurry and read it! I am consumed with impatience!"

"Well, you will be in a worse state than that when you have heard it, Alma! Why, of all the cold-blooded, dastardly threats! It makes my hair stand on end just to see it on paper! Really, I am afraid you'll have to read it yourself——"

A burst of laughter interrupted the sentence.

"Oh, Marion! Give it to me, quick! Do you intend to keep me all day in such suspense? Do let me see for myself how your new adorer expresses his tender passion!"

Marion Marlowe, the beautiful star of the Temple Theatrical Company, was sitting at a desk in her room at a hotel, looking over her morning mail, when she came upon the astonishing missive.

As she handed it over to her friend, Miss Allyn, she laughed a little nervously, for, in spite of her fun, the letter had really shocked her.

Alma Allyn, a dashing-looking young woman, took the bit of paper eagerly, and, as she seated herself upon an ottoman at her lovely companion's feet, she made rapid comments upon the writer.

"Hem! Uses tinted paper of a very poor quality! Writes a sprawling hand that is distinctly feminine. Whew! and indulges in *eau de cologne* baths when he is writing, Marion! Truly, he is an extraordinary creature; but—great jumping Jerusalem! what a way to begin! Why, the fellow actually addresses you as 'Miss Marion Marlowe!'"

"Well, what should he call me?" asked the young girl, demurely. "I am as yet unmarried, and that is what I was christened."

"Pshaw! You know well enough what I mean! He should have said, 'My Adored One,' or 'My Angel!' All mash notes begin that way. I ought to know. I've had almost a dozen!"

"A pretty good record in one week, Alma," said Marion, laughing; "especially as you have been playing stepmothers and adventuresses and maiden aunts principally. But do go on, Alma, and read the chap's effusion. If the commencement astonishes you, I want to see what you will say to the ending."

Miss Allyn clasped her arms around her knees, so as to keep her balance on the footstool, and then proceeded in a dramatic voice to read the rest of the letter.

"'You will doubtless be surprised to receive this letter, but take this word for it, my dear girl, there are greater surprises in store for you!'

"Well, I should hope there were," commented Miss Allyn, as she turned over the page. "There's nothing in a mash note to make one's heart stop beating; but—hello, what is this? Why, Marion, the man is crazy!"

She half rose from the ottoman, but Marion placed her hand on her shoulder.

"Go on and finish," she begged, eagerly. "Read it all out loud! I want to see how it sounds! If it is worse to hear than to read, you'll have to send for a doctor."

"There is a bottle of smelling salts on the table, and some beef tonic in my bag. Brace up, my dear, and I'll try to finish."

"'I shall be at the theatre every night of your stay in this city, and upon each occasion I shall wear a blood-red rose. If you do not smile upon me the third night, I shall blow up the theatre. Believe me, for life or death, a believer in the avenging of unrequited affection!'

"Well, of all things, Marion! Why, the fellow is a loon! I'll give this note to the police at once, and have them look out for his joblots."

"I thought of that," said Marion, holding out her hand for the letter, "only there is a postscript on the back that makes me think it is foolish."

She turned the letter over, and then handed it back.

Alma Allyn glanced at it, and read the words slowly.

"'I am not the only admirer that you have in town; neither am I your only or your worst enemy, Miss Marlowe.'"

Alma Allyn's brows knit into a deep frown. The postscript was certainly more extraordinary than the letter.

"Well, I hope there is a lunatic asylum near here," she said, finally; "for of all the cranks I ever heard of, he certainly takes the bakery."

There was a tap on the door as she finished, and Miss Ellis, the *ingénue* of the company, entered.

"Rehearsal at two o'clock, girls! Are you ready?" she began, and then stopped short, when she saw their faces.

"What in the world has happened? You look like a couple of spooks!" she said, hastily. "Have Dr. Brooks and Mr. Temple decided to fight a duel, or do Miss Marlowe's bones begin to tell her that we are on the track of more tragedies?"

"Yes; what is it, Miss Allyn?" chimed in another voice from the doorway, as Mrs. Burnside, another member of the cast, came in, leading little Ruby, her pretty daughter.

Miss Allyn passed over the letter for them both to read.

"Pshaw! It's a fake of some kind!" exclaimed Miss Ellis, laughing. "As like as not it is some one that knows you! Just take my advice, and smile on every fellow in

the audience who sports a red rose. It is the safest way, apparently, to save the roof of the theatre."

Mrs. Burnside was still scanning the letter attentively, and, as Miss Ellis spoke, she drew an envelope from her pocket.

"It's the same writing, exactly," she said, as she handed the two letters to Miss Allyn; "only my anonymous friend signs himself a 'Saver of the Innocent.'"

Miss Allyn opened Mrs. Burnside's letter, and read the contents aloud.

"BE WARNED! KEEP LITTLE RUBY AWAY FROM THE ARCANUM THE THIRD NIGHT. IF RED ROSE FAILS, ALL WILL BE DESOLATION!"

The words were in capitals and underscored. There was no mistaking the fact that they were both by the same writer.

Even Miss Ellis looked concerned at this double warning, but Marion recovered herself promptly, as she thrust both letters into her pocket.

"I'll keep them a while, if you don't mind, Mrs. Burnside," she said. "I can't say that I have any premonition of evil, but I am free to confess that those letters sound ominous."

"Oh, Marion! I have an inspiration," cried Miss Allyn, suddenly. "I haven't been in the newspaper business for nothing. Let me take those letters and have them published! It will be a splendid 'ad,' and, perhaps, will boom business!"

"As if any one would come—especially on the 'third night,'" laughed Miss Ellis. "Surely, no one would care to go to heaven by such rapid transit."

"We'll leave it to Bert Jackson!" cried Miss Allyn, as she heard a familiar knock on the door. "Let Bert in, Miss Ellis, and we'll put the matter before him. The question is: Shall we annihilate the crank who wrote the mash note, or shall we use his effusions to enhance the halo of Marion's glory?"

Before any one could answer, a young man entered. He had a handsome, manly face, and was carrying in his hand a bunch of roses for Marion.

"Gee whiz! What's up? Is this a star chamber session?" he began, as he laid the roses on the desk in front of the beautiful young girl.

"Yes, that's what it is, Bert, and we need your advice badly," retorted Miss Ellis. "There's a loon in this town who has gone daft over Marion——"

"He's no loon, then! That's sure proof of his sanity!" broke in Bert, good-naturedly.

"But he says he will be at the theatre every night with a red rose in his buttonhole, and, if she doesn't smile at him, he's going to wreck the theatre!"

"Great Cæsar's ghost! He's got it bad! Sorry for the poor devil!" remarked Bert, with great gravity.

"But you don't seem to understand that he is serious," went on Miss Allyn. "Why, listen, Bert, he has even warned Mrs. Burnside. She is not to take Ruby to the theatre the night upon which he wreaks his vengeance upon Marion and her coldness."

A look of bewilderment passed over the young man's features.

"Is that straight, Miss Allyn?" he asked, in an altered voice: "for, if it is, I believe we are up against a tragedy—a thing that I devoutly hoped we would escape in this city."

"Oh, Bert! What do you know?" gasped Marion, breathlessly. "I see in your face that you have heard something of this matter! Do hurry and tell us?"

Bert was thoroughly serious now, and his manner was convincing. Without a word, he went over and picked up the bunch of roses.

After a moment's searching in the foil

about their stems, he discovered a tiny note, which he handed to Marion.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW SOUBRETTE.

An hour later there was a consultation in Marion's dressing-room at the theatre.

The company was booked at the Arcanum for just three nights, and, of course, they were anxious to play to good houses.

"If this thing had happened in Chicago or at any point farther west, I might be nervous," Mr. Temple, the proprietor and manager remarked, thoughtfully; "but in Cleveland, Miss Marlowe, it is altogether different. I doubt if any such bloodthirsty creature would be allowed in the theatre."

"Oh, but he is coming first as a lover! The *rôle* of avenger and assassin is only for the third night!" cried Miss Allyn, nervously; 'and that is as good as saying that the deed will be done; for there's not power enough beneath the heavens to make Marion smile at him."

She looked at the young girl admiringly as she spoke, for there was no one on earth whom she loved as she did Marion.

"I would smile if it was necessary," said Marion, laughingly; "only, of course, I don't know what the term implies. Our mashers are not usually content with a smile over the footlights."

"No; they want suppers, with cold bottles, after the show," spoke up Miss Ellis, promptly. "I've seen other girls have them in the companies that I have belonged to, but, thank goodness, I was never an object of admiration. I was always too slow for the average Johnny!"

"A good recommendation, dear," said Marion, sweetly. "I hope you'll always be that way as long as you are on the stage. A girl is so foolish to be any different."

"Oh, but you certainly don't object to a broiled lobster and some beer after the performance, do you, Miss Marlowe?" asked a new member of the cast.

"I certainly do," said Marion, quietly. "Lobster gives me bad dreams, and beer makes me bilious. But we were speaking of eating with strangers after the show, Miss Chester. You surely do not approve of going out with the 'Johnnies?'"

"Oh, I wouldn't object, if they were nice," was the reply; and Miss Chester tossed her blonde head in a disdainful manner. "When a girl is on the stage, she belongs to the public, and it is part of her duty to be nice to the 'Johnnies.'"

"I am very sorry you think so," said Marion, soberly. "I am not a prude myself, but I do not think it proper to make promiscuous acquaintances. It is my art, if I have any, that belongs to the public, not my personality, my character or my conscience. These are mine, to have and to hold! I should not care to tarnish any one of them with any unladylike conduct."

The look of reproof upon her face nettled the vivacious blonde, and she tossed her head more airily than ever.

"The greatest actresses in the world are the most immoral," she said, stoutly. "A woman cannot be a saint and succeed in this profession."

"Some of our great actresses have been immoral, I admit," answered Marion, soberly, "but I do not believe that their actions added anything to their genius. As for being a saint, that is a difficult thing to be in any profession; but I trust that, whatever my walk in life, I shall always be a true, upright and self-respecting woman!"

Her eyes shone like stars as she said the words, and Miss Chester's cheeks flushed and her glance wavered a little.

"It would not do for any of my girls to conduct themselves unbecomingly, Miss

Chester," said Mr. Temple, sternly. "And as you are new to the company, I may as well warn you to be careful."

"Oh, there's no danger of my disgracing myself," retorted the young girl, snappishly; "but I wouldn't be so prim that I made every one uncomfortable!"

She looked at Marion as she spoke, but the star answered, sweetly: "I hope I am not that, I am sure, Miss Chester. Perhaps, when you know me better, you will not think so."

"It doesn't matter what she thinks! We all know you are just as good as you can be," spoke up the soubrette, quickly. "The person who dislikes you, Miss Marlowe, is my sworn enemy!"

She glared at Miss Chester as she spoke, and the blonde returned the look with interest. It was evident that in future there would be anything but friendship between them.

"Go put on the gloves, you two, and have it out," advised Bert, good-naturedly. "We've got something to think of that is very important. The question on the docket now is, how to dispose of his joblots—he of the red, red rose and the unrequited affection."

"I have thought of a scheme," said Dr. Brookes, the leading man, smiling. "As soon as we identify him, we will put a detective on his track. He can come to the theatre every night, if he chooses, but our detective must see that there are no bombs in his pocket."

"I can't make anything out of this note," said the manager, as he held out a bit of paper. "You say, Bert, that it was hidden in a bouquet of red roses that were sent to Miss Marlowe. Now, what I want to know is, how were they sent? Did a messenger boy bring them?"

Bert glanced around the room before he answered. He was looking for some one who was not in the dressing-room, and, not finding him, he stepped to the door and peered cautiously into the space between the dressing rooms that was half filled with baggage and piles of scenery.

"The chap has gone," he said, coming back from the tour of investigation. "He was here when I came in, talking to Olcott, the new 'villain.' He must have vamoosed when we called our consultation."

"Was he a tall, slim fellow, with blue eyes and a sandy beard?" asked Miss Ellis, quickly. "If he was, he is the chap that I saw at the station. I noticed him because he was watching us in such a curious manner."

"That's the chap," remarked Bert. "He looked as if he was hungry. He handed me the flowers as I was standing in the lobby; then he went straight out on the sidewalk and bought a bag of peanuts, and I took the flowers over to Marion."

"Eating peanuts is not a very compromising act," said Marion, laughing. "Yet, strange as it seems, the roses were from the masher, and the note is marked 'Number One,' and is too affectionate for anything."

"Oh, he evidently intends to give you every opportunity to love him," said Miss Allyn. "He's going to spoon for two nights, but on the third things will be different. It's a case of one lover not taking 'No' for an answer."

"I guess we can manage the affair without the aid of the police," said Mr. Temple, smiling. "I'll have the ushers look out for him, as well as the man in the box office. They can find some way to detain any suspicious-looking fellow, and there's always an officer or two hanging around the lobby."

"I don't feel nervous at all! Please don't mind me," said Marion, calmly. "Of course, it isn't pleasant to be made love to that way, but as the poor fellow is probably a lunatic I really can't blame him."

The others all laughed, and Mr. Temple started for the door. It was two o'clock, and the stage-manager was waiting to direct a rehearsal.

"There's a fellow down here who is inclined to be curious, Mr. Temple," said one of the scene shifters, as he suddenly appeared at the doorway. "Would you believe it, he's been asking what Miss Marlowe wears in the third act, and he's so impudent I'm afraid I'll have to kick him out of the theatre!"

"How the deuce did he get in?" asked Mr. Temple, hotly.

"On a pass of yours, sir," was the astonishing reply. "The doorman wouldn't have passed him if he hadn't had it. The pass says, 'Admit Tom Urder to the Arcanum Theatre, in front or behind the scenes,' and it was signed by you, Mr. Temple."

The manager stood perfectly still and stared at the man.

"The follow is an imposter! Let me see him!" he began. "I have never given a pass to any man to come in—not for any reason whatever——"

Bert Jackson gave a yell as he finished the sentence.

"Especially to murder! Do you catch on, old man? Gee whillikens! let me out—I want to see that fellow!"

Marion's cheeks turned pale as she caught the play of words.

"I must see him, too," she said, in her decided voice. "Something tells me he is the one who wrote me that note! What a horrible signature for a man—Tom Urder!"

CHAPTER III.

MISS ELLIS GROWS SUSPICIOUS.

But the man who had brought the flowers was not to be found. He had vanished at the very moment his name was mentioned in the dressing-room.

Mr. Temple questioned the doorkeeper, but he only corroborated Hinton's statement, that the fellow bore a pass which was signed by Mr. Temple.

"Well, be sure and let him in the next time he presents it, and then send for me," said the manager. "I want to see that pass. It is an out-and-out forgery."

"Time to call the rehearsal, sir," said the stage-manager, as he walked over toward the dressing-rooms, where the girls were still chatting.

"I'm too nervous to rehearse! I wish Deering would let me off," said Miss Ellis, suddenly. "That impudent Miss Chester has got me all stirred up. She's a treacherous girl—I am almost sure of it!"

"Oh, don't be hasty in forming an opinion, Miss Ellis," said Marion, quickly. "She may only be thoughtless or ignorant, you know. Wait a little while, dear; she may turn out very nicely."

"You are always so charitable," said Miss Ellis, sweetly. "Really, I don't wonder a bit that the men all love you. We women love you, too, which is something remarkable."

She went over and kissed Marion as she spoke, and just then the call for rehearsal sounded.

"I don't see why that should be so remarkable," Marion had time to say, as she caught up her gloves and started for the stage. "I love my sister women, and I want them to love me. I should feel very much ashamed of myself if other women did not love me."

"And I wouldn't give a cent for the affection of any woman," said Miss Chester, who heard her. "They're all a lot of cats, that are always spitting and scratching at each other."

"Gracious! but you must have been used to a tough lot!" cried Miss Ellis, spitefully. "Thank goodness, there are no spitters or scratchers in this company! We are a happy family, aren't we, Miss Marlowe?"

"I'm sure I hope so," began Marion, in a grieved voice.

"And I'm the grandmother," chimed in Mrs. Burnside, passing her arm about the young girl's waist. "Mr. Temple is our father, and you are the oldest sister, Miss Marlowe. Just wait until I mention that to Bert and Dr. Brookes!"

"Oh, I haven't a doubt that Marion has promised to be a sister to them both," laughed Miss Allyn, as she hurried after them. "The only wonder is that they take it so calmly! Not much like Archie Ray or Ed. Gordon, eh, Marion?"

She had caught up with her friend, and was pinching her arm as she spoke, but Marion faced her with her eyes shining brightly.

"It is true that Mr. Ray went away for a long time, but, oh, Alma, it wasn't altogether because he was disappointed. Really, his health was very bad—he was almost forced to travel!"

"Yes; he had heart disease—a very bad attack. I understand," said Miss Allyn, slyly; "and the strange thing about it was that it was always aggravated by the sight of you. Oh, well, I don't wonder! I'm only sorry for the poor fellow!"

"Then you will be glad to hear my news," said Marion, softly. "Mr. Ray is coming to Cleveland to-day, and will be at the theatre this evening!"

Miss Allyn clasped her hands to her brow and struck a tragic attitude.

"Poor Mr. Temple! Poor doctor! Poor Bert!" she sighed, pathetically. "The plot thickens, Marion! Really, I tremble for the outcome!"

"You'll tremble for other reasons, if you don't hurry, Miss Allyn!" called out Miss Ellis. "We are five minutes late now, and the manager is getting angry. Oh, I just know I'll make a mess of it! I don't know a thing about my 'business.'"

"I have to keep walking back and forth and wringing my hands," said Miss Allyn, hurrying. "I only hope I shall not wring them off in the excess of my agony. As if I should really care because a lover had deserted me!"

"Well, I'd have a fit to own one and lose him," admitted Miss Ellis, honestly. "I am sure I could do that part to perfection, Miss Allyn; so, if you'd rather be the naughty little opera comique fairy, who dazzles all the men with her 'twinkling toes,' I haven't the slightest objection. You can ask Mr. Temple!"

"Good gracious! I'm obliged to you, but I won't change," cried Miss Allyn. "I may depend upon my face to make my fortune, but upon my toes—never!"

There was an impatient call from the stage-manager, which ended the conversation, and the next moment the rehearsal was "on" in a vigorous manner.

"Isn't she just glorious?" whispered Miss Ellis to Bert, as the two stood peering from one of the wings.

"Oh, I wish I were a man! How I would make love to Miss Marlowe!"

"Well, here's a pointer for you, girlie!" said Bert, very candidly. "It wouldn't do you a bit of good, so you are just as well off. The man who makes love to Marion Marlowe has got a proposition on his hands. He has to keep continually reminding himself that he isn't 'the only pebble on the beach;' and it keeps him continually on the anxious-seat, guessing the outcome. You see, I've been in love with Marion all my life," he went on, calmly, "so there isn't an aspect of the case that I haven't studied!"

"Oh, but you are only a boy! You don't expect her to love you, do you?" asked Miss Ellis, loftily.

Bert drew his five feet, eleven inches of height to as great an elevation as possible.

"I may be a boy in years, but I'm a man in some things," he said, proudly. "But, of course, you can't understand."

He dodged just in time to escape a good, sound box on the ear; and, as his cue came just then, he was glad enough of the chance to leave her.

"I'll get square with you, yet," she called out, with a jolly laugh, and just then the girl she disliked so thoroughly came and stood beside her.

"He's a beast of a boy! I detest him!" remarked Miss Chester. "If I was Temple, I wouldn't have him in the company!"

"And if I was Bert Jackson, I wouldn't have Temple in the company," spoke up a masculine voice, as Orrin Olcott, the new "villain," came up behind them.

Both girls turned around and looked at him inquiringly, and the actor lowered his voice as he imparted a bit of information.

"Bert Jackson is as rich as Croesus!" he said, mysteriously. "Why, he's the 'angel' of the company! Temple hasn't got a penny. And, what's more, young Jackson is so blind he can't see what every one else has discovered—that is, that Temple is fast cutting him out with Marion Marlowe!"

Miss Ellis was about to reply, but Miss Chester interrupted her.

"Is that true, is he rich?" she asked, in an anxious voice. "Why, the fellow is only a kid—a perfect little innocent!"

"He's rich, all right, and going to be richer," said the other, cautiously. "If I was a girl, I'd set my cap for Bert Jackson. He may be a little fresh, but——"

Miss Ellis heard her cue, and had to leave just then. She would have been glad to have heard the balance of the sentence.

As she glanced back from the stage a minute later, she saw that they were still talking together, and, although she was not usually very quick at jumping at conclusions, she seemed to feel that their conversation was still about Bert Jackson.

"If I see her making up to him, I'll warn him," she muttered. "I won't have her fooling such a good fellow as Bert! He may be a boy, but he's a noble fellow!"

She was standing at the left of the stage, close to the exit, and Dr. Brookes was holding the "center" with an impassioned address.

"What in the world are you blushing so about, Miss Ellis?" whispered some one in her ear.

The *ingénue* turned a little, and saw Marion behind her, half hidden by the scenery, where she had been listening to the doctor.

"I am sure I don't know; I guess it was my thoughts," she began, lamely.

Marion reached around the scenery and pinched her arm gently.

"Own up! You're in love! I'm sure of it, Miss Ellis! When girls blush at their thoughts, they must be thinking of their lovers."

"Oh, but they must first have the lover!" whispered Miss Ellis, promptly: "and I never had one yet! I'm living in hopes, Miss Marlowe!"

"I expect they are very nice things to have," said Marion, wistfully. "I've always longed to love some one, but, somehow, I seem very cold. I have seen such lovable men, and yet I couldn't love them!"

"Mr. Ray is coming to-night! I heard you say so, Miss Marlowe! Perhaps, when he comes, it will be different. You know he loves you dearly."

"I am afraid it will not be different," murmured Marion, softly. Then she glided out upon the stage to finish the act with Dr. Brookes.

Miss Ellis glanced over her shoulder for another look at Miss Chester, and her eyes

snapped ominously as she saw her fairly beaming on Bert Jackson.

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERIOUS PARCEL.

Long before the curtain rose on the evening performance, every *attaché* of the theatre had been posted in regard to the "masher," who was to make his appearance with a red rose in his button-hole. Every person who had seen the mysterious fellow with the pass during the afternoon was warned to look out for him again that evening.

With these precautions, both Marion and Mr. Temple were satisfied. If the "crank" appeared, he would be watched as carefully as possible.

"They seem to be having hot times in the city nowadays," Bert remarked to Mr. Temple, as the manager met him behind the scenes just before the orchestra started.

"They are having street-car strikes galore, and half the lines are tied up. I was two hours and a half getting out to Garfield's monument!"

"And I took chances with my life trying to call on some acquaintances out on Woodlawn avenue," chimed in Mrs. Burnside. "I got on a car that I was mighty glad to leave, and I hear that it was blown off the track not ten minutes after I left it!"

"Well, I went out to the work-house," broke in Dick Hinton, with a laugh. "If I've got any friends in town, I knew I'd find 'em out there; and, say, there wasn't a spare berth for a fellow, for so much as a night! They are taking in culprits at the rate of forty a minute!"

"Come off, Hinton! Don't stretch it; the truth is bad enough," laughed Bert. "The town is chock full of fire-eaters, or anarchists, or something! They can't tell me these riots are made by honest laborers!"

"Well, I hope they do their rioting at the extreme ends of the city while we are here," said Mr. Temple. "I don't want to lose a penny of our three days' business! We have done all right, so far, and I hope to keep up the record."

"And we've been up against snags ever since we started, too," said Bert, soberly. "First, Marion got thrown from a train, and barely escaped with her life. Then we nearly lost her at Niagara through the rascality of our rivals! Yes; I hope nothing happens to upset us here! I'll succumb to nervous prostration if we strike many more such adventures!"

"Well, so far, we seem threatened by nothing worse than an anonymous letter," said Mr. Temple, smiling; "and if this car strike doesn't extend to the Euclid avenue lines, I guess we'll leave Cleveland better off than we reached it."

"Oh, Mifter Temple!" called out a child's voice at that moment, and little Ruby came running across the scene-room toward the manager. "Mifter Temple, mamma wants you! Please come quick!" lisped the child, as she ran straight into his arms and was lifted to his shoulder.

"What's the matter with mamma?" asked the manager, starting off promptly.

He was walking straight toward the dressing-rooms, but the little one stopped him.

"She's down at the stage door," she said, trying to turn the manager about by pulling on his mustache; "and there's a big man wif her, wot she's awful 'fraid of! She whispered to me to wun and get Mifter Temple."

The manager scowled as he hurried to the stage door. There was something in the child's news that made him a little nervous. When he reached the door, he found Mrs. Burnside confronting an ugly-looking fellow. He was big and black, with coarse, vulgar features.

Mr. Temple glanced around, but there was no doorkeeper in sight, and his first thought was one of admiration for Mrs. Burnside. She had pluckily kept this fellow until she could send for the manager.

The actress breathed a sigh of relief as Mr. Temple appeared with her beautiful little daughter still perched on his shoulder.

"This—er—gentleman wishes to see Miss Marlowe," she began, quickly. "The doorkeeper was out, but I happened to see him as he entered. He says his business with our star is very important, Mr. Temple."

The fellow scowled fiercely as Mr. Temple set little Ruby in her mother's arms, and then calmly confronted him.

"I am Miss Marlowe's manager. I attend to her business," he said, curtly. "Have you a note or verbal message for her?"

There was another scowl and a sharp glance from a pair of beady eyes; then the fellow drew a dirty-looking parcel from his inside vest pocket.

"A leetle gift for ze lady from an admirer," he stammered, with a strong French accent. "Ze givaire inclose his card. *Bon jour, monsieur et madame!*"

With an astonishingly quick movement, he placed the parcel in the manager's hand, and the next second was gone through the doorway into the darkness.

Mrs. Burnside and Mr. Temple stared at each other, then both were brought to their senses by the sound of a scuffle.

The doorkeeper had come back just as the fellow darted out, and in a second he had thought of the manager's orders. He grappled with the fellow, and a violent scuffle ensued. As Mr. Temple pushed open the stage door, there was a flash of light and the report of a pistol.

"Quick! Call help! He has shot him!" shouted Mr. Temple, rushing outside.

Mrs. Burnside rushed back into the sceneroom, shrieking, and, at her first cry, every member of the company came flocking to the sidewalk.

"He's only winged him! Poor John! He was trying to do his duty," said Mr. Temple, as he helped his doorkeeper inside. "Fortunately, an officer saw him, and is on his track. I can't go after him myself—it is time to start the orchestra."

"I'm all right! It's only a scratch," murmured the doorkeeper, gamely. "Just let Jim here go home with me and get a doctor to fix me up. I'll be on deck again by this time to-morrow."

Dr. Brookes took him by the hand and led him under a light. He had a surgical case in his hands that looked decidedly business-like.

"I'll fix you up in a jiffy, and then you can go home," he said. "I'm not on for twenty minutes yet, and I have Jim to assist me. The rest of you go on. You are not needed in this operation."

"But I can stay, surely. You know I don't go on until you do, doctor," said a thrilling voice.

Marion had come with the rest when she heard Mrs. Burnside, and she was eager to assist in making the injured man comfortable. Dr. Brookes turned and looked at her with a smile upon his face.

"My little nurse is always welcome. I cannot refuse her," he said, softly. "You shall bandage the arm, Marion, just as soon as I have bathed it."

The rest of the company went back to their dressing-rooms, but Mr. Temple bit his lips as he turned his back upon Marion and the doctor.

He had been trying for a long time to conquer his jealousy for the doctor, but such scenes as this, where the young physician's affection fairly blazed from his eyes, made it difficult to keep his good resolution.

Over and over again he had tried to declare his love for his star, but some way at each attempt, the young girl's manner baffled him. He could feel intuitively that such a declaration would pain her, and, perhaps, it would even raise a barrier that could never be removed.

The orchestra was sending its strains to every corner of the auditorium now; and as he hurried to the front of the house, he suddenly remembered the parcel. What had he done with it in the excitement of the moment? He searched his pockets carefully, but could not find it.

Suddenly, a hideous suspicion took possession of him. Suppose the fellow was the "loon" masher, who had written the various notes!

That parcel might contain anything from a trinket to a bomb!

Mr. Temple retraced his steps—he must find it immediately.

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICIONS.

As each member of the company went out upon the stage, they gave a sharp glance over the footlights at the sea of faces.

Every *boutonnière* was scanned carefully, but there was not a single red rose in sight, and as the play went on they all began to breathe easier.

"Guess he's changed his mind," whispered Bert to Miss Ellis, as they stood together in the rear of the stage, while little Ruby and Marion had a short scene together; "or perhaps that chap that shot poor John was the very fellow! I do hope the police have caught him."

"There's a man in the fourth row who is staring awfully hard at Miss Marlowe! Just look at him, Bert—first seat on the aisle; there's a lady with him."

"Then he's safe," said Bert, as his eyes followed her glance. The next instant he had all he could do to keep from hurrahing.

"It's Archie Ray, as true as I live! Looking splendidly, too; and that's his sister with him!"

Marion turned to him just then, and the comedian went forward. He had some few words to speak and a little scene to enact with Ruby, but he managed cleverly to point out Mr. Ray, and Marion blushed with pleasure as she finally discovered him.

"Now I expect there'll be war to the knife," Bert whispered, as Dr. Brookes came on, and he could again retire to the background.

Miss Ellis was still upon the stage, but she had very little to say; and, as Bert had to pass her several times, they managed to keep up a running conversation.

"Do you think she loves him?" Miss Ellis asked, with a glance at the audience.

"Of course not! How could she, when I'm on deck?" was the answer.

"Don't flatter yourself, Bert!"

"Miss Chester says I'm the sweetest thing that ever happened! Thank goodness, we've got a soubrette, at least, that appreciates my value!"

Miss Ellis blushed, but it was a blush of indignation.

"She's a treacherous girl! Look out for her, Bert! I wouldn't take her word if she swore on forty Bibles!"

"You're jealous," said Bert, teasingly. "Well, don't worry, my dear; I may not be handsome, but I am always faithful."

"Pooh! She'll make you forget your best friends, Bert! She's a shrewd one, I tell you! If you come to grief, remember I warned you!"

"I will, thanks; but there's a better way, if you want to protect me. Fall in love with me yourself, and I won't look at Miss Chester. While I am waiting for Marion, I might spoon with you, just for practice!"

"You impudent boy! I'd like to see myself!" retorted Miss Ellis, scornfully; then she was obliged to leave him, and the conversation ended.

"Well, so far all is well! There's not a sign of the masher with the red, red rose in the house," said the stage-manager to Marion, as the curtain fell upon the third act.

"There are chaps with chrysanthemums and all sorts of posies in their button-holes; but I've looked the house over carefully, and there's not a rose of any sort or description."

"I guess he's changed his mind or transferred his affection," laughed Olcott. "Those cranks are always uncertain in their doings. Perhaps he has even forgotten that Miss Marlowe was the object of his passion, and has gone to some other theatre to spend the evening."

"I hope to goodness he has! One crank in a night is enough," said Mrs. Burnside, nervously. "I feel almost sure that that fellow was the one. He asked for Miss Marlowe and left a parcel for her. By the way, did you get it?" she asked, suddenly, turning to Marion. The young girl was on her way to her dressing-room, but she turned her head to answer:

"I have not seen any parcel, Mrs. Burnside. Are you sure he left one?"

"Certain! He gave it to Mr. Temple just as he darted out. Ten chances to one he has it in his pocket."

"I'll ask him. I've got to go to the front," said Olcott, obligingly.

"I'm not on again until the last act. It won't take me a minute to wash off my make-up."

"I'm very curious to know what it could be," said Marion, seriously.

"Well, according to the bearer's appearance, I should judge it might be a box of spaghetti," laughed Mrs. Burnside. "He was the most dagoish-looking Frenchman I ever set eyes on!"

"And a cold-blooded murderer, probably, at that," chimed in Bert; "but that sort of thing seems to be the proper caper in Cleveland just now. There were several people shot on the street-cars to-day, according to the evening paper."

"And no end of accidents from brickbats and stones," remarked Dick Hinton. "It is very apparent that King Riot reigns. The mayor seems helpless to protect his people."

"Well, we will try to protect ours a little better than we have," said Mr. Temple, coming up. "I blame myself for that affair, this evening. With the city in such a turmoil I should have been more careful."

"Have they caught him, Mr. Temple?" asked a dozen voices.

"Not yet, although I've been hoping to hear to the contrary. He must have run like a deer. The policeman lost him completely."

"How about that parcel—the one he left for Miss Marlowe?" asked Mrs. Burnside, eagerly.

Marion had just reached the door of her dressing-room, but she turned back to hear the answer.

"I am sorry to say that I have lost it," said Mr. Temple, soberly. "I remember that the fellow almost forced it into my hand, but the scuffle and the pistol shot rattled me completely. I haven't the remotest idea what I did with the parcel."

"Have you searched your pockets?"

"Yes, and everything else! I've had every employee of the theatre searching for it," was the answer.

"I am almost sure you put it in your pocket," said Mrs. Burnside, thoughtfully.

"Then my pocket must have been picked while I was on the sidewalk," was the answer; "and there was not a soul around, except the members of my company."

"Oh, well, then, I must be mistaken," said Mrs. Burnside, slowly.

As she spoke, she glanced up and saw Marion near her.

The young actress had come back to hear what Mr. Temple was saying; and, as she listened, her glance rested unconsciously upon the face of Miss Chester.

Mrs. Burnside's eyes turned immediately in the same direction. Neither had the slightest significance in their glance, but, as Miss Chester saw it, her face flushed crimson. In an instant she turned on her heel and rushed toward her dressing-room. Marion and Mrs. Burnside looked at each other, but there was nothing said. They were

neither of them inclined to jump at rapid conclusions.

Mr. Temple was still trying to recall what he had done with the package, when the first bars of the orchestra sent the cast flying to their dressing-rooms. Just as Marion was hurriedly donning her costume for the fourth act, a note was brought to her, which she tore open, eagerly. It was from Archie Ray, one of her dearest friends. As there was no one to see her, she kissed it tenderly.

The next moment Miss Allyn came in and saw it lying on the dressing-table.

"Didn't it make your heart beat any faster when you saw him, dearie?" she asked, merrily.

"Oh, I really believe it did!" replied Marion, laughing. "I am so eager to see them that I can hardly wait until the performance is over, but I have a confession to make to you, dear Alma! I am quite as anxious to see Adele as I am to see Archie!"

"You are safe!" laughed her friend. "You are not in love yet, Marion. If his sister is as dear to you as the young man himself, there is nothing to fear in that direction."

The last act passed off with the actors still on the lookout for the crank with the red rose, but the curtain fell without his having been discovered.

Marion was just changing to her street dress when the stage-manager tapped on the door of her room.

"Here's a bunch of roses for you, Miss Marlowe, and a parcel," he called out. "They were brought by a brother of Christopher Columbus!"

Marion opened the door and found the whole company standing in the space between the dressing-rooms, with the gravest of expressions upon their features.

"What in the world do you mean?" she asked, in bewilderment.

Mr. Temple stepped forward and took a bouquet of red roses and a small, dirty-looking package from the stage-manager's hands.

"Another of those fellows came to the stage door with these, Miss Marlowe," he said, anxiously. "The man on the door says he was perfectly respectful, but he was clever enough to send one of his friends to shadow him. Now, with your consent, I'll throw these roses out of the window and put the parcel in soak in a pail of water."

"Oh, are you really as suspicious as that?" asked Marion, anxiously.

"Do it, by all means, Mr. Temple," spoke up Dr. Brookes. "Don't take a chance with that crazy masher!"

"Here, let me do it, old man! You are more valuable to the company than I am," chimed in Bert, at the same time stepping forward and holding out his hand for the parcel.

"Here, put it in here!" laughed Marion, bringing a large wash bowl of water.

Bert took the parcel gingerly and put it in the water, then Mr. Temple carried the bowl and locked it in a closet.

"I'll inspect it to-morrow morning," he said, decidedly. "I'm not taking any chances on that fellow, Miss Marlowe!"

CHAPTER VI.

A RED ROSE.

At ten o'clock the next morning, Marion, accompanied by Miss Allyn, Dr. Brookes and Bert, met Mr. Temple at the theatre.

Marion had enjoyed a delightful chat with Archie Ray and his sister at an early hour, besides having had supper with them after the performance the evening before.

It was with considerable difficulty that she could bring her spirits down to the necessary gravity when she stood with her friends around the now thoroughly water-soaked package.

"Oh, I feel just too happy to believe anything evil of any one this morning," she said, with a merry smile. "It was so delightful to see my old friends, and everything is so lovely this beautiful morning! It will cloud my happiness all day if we find anything wrong in that package."

"Treachery and crime are not pleasant things to face. I wish we could spare you, Marion," said the doctor, tenderly.

"But Miss Marlowe insisted on being here and seeing the package opened," said Mr. Temple, quickly. "It isn't too late now for you to change your mind. Still, I know you

will insist upon our telling you of the contents."

Marion calmed herself instantly.

"Oh, I am not so weak or so childish as all that," she said, quickly; "I did feel almost too happy for anything this morning; but go on and open it, Bert; it will not make any difference!"

Dr. Brookes glanced at her keenly. He could guess the cause of her happiness. It gave him a dull sense of pain, but he tried to stifle it manfully.

Archie Ray had been his rival in days gone by; he was wondering now if his suit would be successful, if Marion had learned to love him during his months of absence.

The doctor studied the young girl's face, but it told him nothing. As his eyes were bent upon her, she suddenly burst out laughing.

"A bracelet! Who would have believed it? Oh, I am so glad, Mr. Temple! To think, after all our nervousness, that it is only a bracelet, a beauty, too. Do let me see it!"

"Well, it's been 'in soak' once, if no more!" said Bert, hilariously; "but it won't hurt it a bit; the stones are diamonds!"

Marion took the trinket and dried it with her handkerchief; then held it up so that they all could see it.

It was a handsome bracelet and a costly one, too. There were several large stones, and the setting was unique and very tasteful.

As she was admiring it, Bert fished out a water-soaked note; but it fell to pieces as he touched it, so he could not decipher it.

"Do you know, I believe this is the note to the other parcel. It looks exactly like it," said Mr. Temple, thoughtfully; "and if it is, then I have lost a valuable trinket."

"Which some one may have found," said Miss Allyn, thoughtfully. "Well, I admit I feel relieved. I was sure it was an infernal machine, or something on that order."

"What shall I do with it, Mr. Temple?" asked Marion. "Of course, I can't give it back, as I don't know the sender. Can you suggest any way of ridding me of it?"

"I think I had better keep it and await developments," said Mr. Temple, slowly. "If they catch the fellow that brought the other parcel, I may be able to discover the donor. And, anyway, I advise you all to keep silent about the contents of this package. Don't tell even the other members of the company until I think it safe to do so."

"A good idea," said the doctor, quickly. "We'll keep as mum as oysters, and, perhaps, we'll find the culprit."

"I hope you are not nervous over your unknown admirer, Miss Marlowe," said the manager, softly, as he put the bracelet in his pocket. "I feel sure that the fellow was not in the house last night, and he'll not be there to-night, if I can prevent it."

"These fellows that bring these parcels must be his friends," remarked Bert; "and pretty desperate fellows they are, or they would not be carrying pistols."

"I admit I am puzzled by the whole thing," said the manager. "In my career in the theatrical business I have met all sorts of cranks, but this fellow has ways that are peculiarly his own. I am going to speak to the police to-day; I think it would be safer."

"Then I can put a hint of it in the paper," broke in Miss Allyn, delightedly. "It's high time we got the benefit of the 'ad,' Mr. Temple! I can word it so that it will not scare the people away, but, on the contrary, make the public more eager to come and see Marion!"

"All right, Miss Allyn! You have my consent," was the answer. "I am sure you know how to do it to make the best impression."

They were just leaving the office, and, as he spoke, Mr. Temple managed to move closer to Marion.

"Will you take luncheon with me this noon, Miss Marlowe?" he asked, softly.

Marion's cheeks flushed a little, but she looked up honestly.

"Too late, Mr. Temple! I have already promised to lunch with Mr. Ray, an old friend, you know, who is just passing through Cleveland."

Mr. Temple bit his lips.

"I seem to be always 'too late,'" he murmured; then as he looked away, his glance fell upon the doctor. Somehow, the sight of his leading man's face made him ashamed of his temper. If the doctor could endure his disappointment so heroically, it behooved him also to act the part of a gentleman.

"Mr. Ray is fortunate," he tried to say, smilingly; then, a moment later, he put the young ladies on a car and went to lunch with Bert and Dr. Brookes.

"How that man does worship you," said Alma Allyn, as they watched the three retreating forms from the car window; "Mr. Temple, I mean. He is two-thirds crazy, Marion! Not such a philosophical person as our friend, the doctor."

"No, his temperament is different," said Marion, thoughtfully; then, as the car stopped suddenly, she half rose to discover the reason.

"Sit down, quick, ladies!" called out the conductor, excitedly. "Keep your heads as low as possible; there's a mob on the corner! We're likely to get stoned if we go any farther!"

"Then we'll leave you right here," spoke up Miss Allyn, promptly. "They'll never be so crazy as to stone two ladies!"

"I wouldn't get out yet! The police will be here in a minute!" said a gentleman on the car.

"They would not dare to hurt us!" said Marion, rising. "I am in a hurry to keep an engagement, so I shall not wait a minute longer!"

They started to leave the car and, as Miss Allyn reached the door, Marion stepped calmly before her.

The gripman was still at his post, although the mob that was coming from all directions looked decidedly threatening.

Marion stood a moment upon the steps and then faced them, calmly; she descended to the street and held out her hand to Miss Allyn.

"Shame on you for riding in those cars!" yelled a bare-headed, haggard woman in the crowd. "Ye give yer nickels to thieves, while honest people are starving!"

Marion paid no heed, but walked slowly to the sidewalk.

"I'd slap their faces for a dime!" screeched the voice again, and the wretched-looking creature crowded in front of Marion

Without the slightest hesitation, Marion put her hand on the woman's shoulder. There was a smile on her face that made it gloriously beautiful.

"I am sorry you are being robbed, but we are strangers in the city," she said, sweetly. "Really, we know nothing of your troubles, but you have our sympathy, madam."

The woman drew back with a shame-faced look, and the next second another wretched-looking creature appeared before Marion. She had only one look at his face, when Miss Allyn took her by the arm and almost dragged her through the crowd; but in that brief glance she saw that the man had wild, hollow, blue eyes, and that there was a monstrous red rose in the buttonhole of his shabby coat. The rose was of the variety which she had reason to remember. It was exactly like the bunch which Mr. Temple had thrown out of the window at the theatre.

CHAPTER VII.

BERT'S PHILOSOPHY.

An hour later Marion was eating luncheon with Archie Ray and his sister, and, of course, she told them of all her experiences on the road, from the time of leaving New York until the present minute. More than once Archie Ray's handsome face paled at her recital, and Adele put her hand on Marion's in a mute expression of sympathy.

"And now I am pursued by a crazy 'masher,'" finished Marion, laughingly. "A fellow that looks like a ghost, with his hollow eyes and haggard face! I only caught one glimpse of him, but I shall never forget him!"

"Can you sketch from memory?" asked Mr. Ray, suddenly. "If you can, I want you to draw a picture of that fellow! Just a rough outline, of course, showing his general appearance."

He handed Marion a paper and pencil as he spoke, and the young girl closed her eyes for a moment; then she took the paper and made a few rapid strokes.

"There! He had a queer-shaped face! Something like that," she said, pointing to her picture; "and he was tall and thin, with narrow, stooping shoulders!"

Mr. Ray put the sketch in his pocket, after a careful look at it.

"I shall be at the theatre again to-night, and I'll keep my eyes open for him," he said.

as he helped her to some of the viands on the table.

"Yes, and so shall I," said his sister, promptly. "I am pretty clever at reading character, so I shall study all the faces, and if I see one that shows a mixture of love and diabolical intent, I shall promptly set Archie to searching his pockets."

"Then, with so many protectors, I am sure I am safe!" laughed the young actress; "although, to tell the truth, I never dreamed of being frightened until poor John, the doorkeeper, was shot last evening."

"Is he all right to-day?" asked Miss Ray, interestedly.

"Not well enough to be on duty, Dr. Brookes says; but he'll be out to-morrow, in all probability."

At the mention of his rival's name, Archie Ray frowned a little, but a moment later his brow had cleared and a look of honest admiration lighted his face, as he spoke of the doctor.

"Such an extraordinary notion for him to turn actor!" he said, laughing. "And, really, he is great! I was astonished at him last evening. His performance in that part made me almost ambitious to go and do likewise."

"I believe you could act, dear," said his sister, fondly; "and I wish you would try it, if it is only to keep you from being so downhearted and melancholy."

Marion glanced up at the words and saw Archie looking at her. His face was scarlet, and his eyes wavered a little.

Marion understood only too well, but even if she had not, Ray's reproachful glance at his sister would have settled any doubts as to the cause of his melancholy.

For a moment Marion herself was not a little confused. After a pause, Adele remarked:

"When is your rehearsal, Marion; we must not keep you. Archie will drive you to the theatre, while I do a little shopping, and you can be sure that we will both be on hand at the theatre this evening."

Marion kissed her tenderly, and a few minutes later she was in a carriage, with Mr. Ray at her side, driving rapidly toward the theatre.

Ray talked merrily on a host of topics, but never once referred to his sister's remark, nor did Marion show by word or sign that it was still uppermost in her mind.

Several times on their way they saw scenes of turmoil at the street corners; but, although Marion looked sharply for the wearer of the red rose, she was not able to discover him.

As they reached the theatre, Bert and Dr. Brookes stood on the sidewalk before the entrance, and both came forward at once to shake hands with Archie Ray, after which they escorted Marion to the stage door and stopped for a chat when they reached the scene-room.

Miss Chester passed them on her way to the dressing-room, and as she caught Bert's eye, she smiled upon him sweetly, and beckoned him to follow her.

"Hello! Are you two getting spoony?" asked the doctor, softly. "Why, Bert, I thought Miss Ellis came first in your young affection. And after her should come Miss Leslie, the dark-haired mimic: that is, if you are keeping your affections in order."

"A thing which has never been done by gods or mortals," said Bert, laughingly. "Miss Ellis is all right, but she's a bit too—well, too plain spoken, I guess, you'd call it. Miss Leslie is too snippy and snubby for me, while Miss Chester is really growing more amiable every minute. She began like a Tartar, but now she's almost an angel!"

"For a very good reason, Bert! She thinks you are one!" called out Miss Ellis.

She had come up behind him just in time to hear the last of his sentence.

"There are no wings on my back, are there?" asked Bert, trying to feel of his shoulders.

"I didn't mean that kind," said Miss Ellis, winking at the doctor; "but I won't say anything more! A word to the wise ought to be sufficient."

"I'm going to ask her what you mean," said Bert, starting toward the dressing-rooms. "If she really thinks I am an angel, it's time I undeceived her."

"Better let her think so, Bert," said the doctor, gravely. "I would not rile her just now; she's been uppish all the morning. I

met her an hour ago and she would hardly look at me."

"Where was she?" asked Miss Ellis, with a little mischief in her voice.

The doctor laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't tell secrets, Miss Ellis," he said, gayly; "and if Miss Chester has won Bert's affections away from you, I can't help admiring her. You are awfully foolish, my dear, to let him escape you."

"Pshaw! What do I care for him!" cried Miss Ellis, jokingly. "When I have a lover, I want a man; not a kid like Bert. Why, he's nothing but an infant!"

"Miss Chester likes infants of my kind," retorted Bert. The next minute he was rapping on the door of the soubrette's dressing-room.

Miss Ellis hesitated for a moment and then, as the doctor and Marion became engaged in conversation, she went slowly to her own dressing-room, which adjoined that of Miss Chester.

She had no motive in mind further than to prepare for the rehearsal, but as Bert's voice came to her over the partition, she listened involuntarily and then smiled delightedly.

"Oh, you are the sweetest thing that ever happened, no doubt about it," Bert was saying, enthusiastically; "but really, Miss Chester, I am hopelessly mashed on another. It's one of those sad things that you read about; the 'irony of fate,' or something on that order. Don't you think you can brace up a little, if I get you a glass of seltzer?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A DISCOVERY.

The curtain was just rising on the first act of the evening performance when Mr. Temple met Marion and Miss Allyn half-way across the scene-room.

"No trace of the masher yet, Miss Marlowe," he said, softly. "I've looked over the house, and so have my men. There's not a man or boy with a red rose in his button-hole."

"Which makes it look more and more certain that the fellow who shot John was really the masher, doesn't it?" asked Miss Allyn.

Mr. Temple spoke quickly, as he answered her question.

"I forgot to tell you, that fellow has been arrested. He is only a dupe of the guilty person, apparently. He just broke down and wept when they took him to the cell. The authorities think he was scared into delivering that parcel, and the scare was still on him when he fired the pistol."

"It's a bad plan for nervous men to be carrying pistols," said Miss Allyn, dryly. "Poor John is the sufferer in this particular instance."

"But did he not divulge a word by which you could trace the sender of the parcel?" asked Marion, eagerly.

Mr. Temple shook his head.

"It was given him by a man with a full beard, he says, and all that he can remember is that the man threatened to annihilate both him and his family if he did not do the errand, and he flourished some sort of a badge before the fellow's eyes, which had the effect of scaring him half out of his senses."

"And the second messenger, the one that brought the bracelet?" whispered Miss Allyn, cautiously.

"Has not even been scented since," was the manager's reply. "The fellow who shadowed him lost him completely."

"Well, perhaps the real culprit has become discouraged by this time," said Marion, and then she told Mr. Temple of the fellow on the street corner, who had appeared so suddenly before her, wearing a red rose in his button-hole.

"I'll go out and have another look," was the serious answer. "If he does really exist, we must be very careful."

"Bert and Miss Chester act like lovers. Quick! Look at them, Marion," whispered Miss Allyn, as the manager turned away.

Marion glanced over her shoulder in the direction indicated by her friend, and saw Bert and the soubrette whispering together in a dark corner of the scene-room.

"A couple of spoons, aren't they?" whispered a jovial voice, as Miss Leslie, the mimic that Marion had engaged at Buffalo, walked slowly past them.

Marion did not answer; she was a little puzzled by Bert's actions. It had been her firm belief that he really liked Miss Ellis.

"She's not the kind of a girl for him to fall in love with," said Miss Allyn, with another sharp look. "I don't wish to misjudge her, but I'm afraid she's treacherous."

"I hate to think so," said Marion, sadly. "She's a very pretty girl, and quite clever, also. Perhaps it is only her way, and we haven't become used to it!"

"Well, I hope I never shall," said Miss Allyn, promptly. "Do you know, Marion, the doctor saw her coming out of a pawnshop to-day? He wouldn't have told me if he hadn't been afraid that the girl was hard up and needed money. He wanted me to find out, if I possibly could, so that we could find some way of helping her, if she was really needy."

"And did you find out?" asked Marion, eagerly, as Miss Allyn paused for breath.

"No, indeed! She denied that she had been there!" was the surprising answer. "And to think the doctor says he actually saw her!"

"Did you tell her——?" began Marion, but her friend interrupted her.

"Not much! I merely said that some one saw her coming out, and that, if she was in need of money, I would let her have some. The minute I spoke she went into a tantrum. She swore she had never been inside of a pawnshop, and called the whole community liars! That settled me, girlie. I am done with Miss Chester!"

"Oh, Miss Marlowe! Des see my pitty dwess!" called out little Ruby, at that minute. She was running across the dimly-lighted room, dodging the piles of rubbish and scene ropes to get to Marion.

"It is just too sweet for anything, darling," said Marion, kissing her. "I expect mamma has made it for you to wear in the fourth act, when my little Ruby and I are sitting in the twilight."

Ruby patted Marion's cheek and nestled a little closer.

"It's a wonder Bert and Miss Chester don't apply for the *rôle* of lovers on the stage; they seem to be practicing over there in the corner," whispered Miss Allyn.

There was an amused look in her eyes, but her voice was serious. She hated to see Bert doing anything that was beneath his dignity, and Miss Chester had taken advantage of the semi-darkness to almost lean on his shoulder.

"I tell you, she is a designing creature! She is trying her best to inveigle Bert into a flirtation," she went on, softly; "and, honestly, I believe she is accomplishing her purpose. Bert looks for all the world as if he was about to kiss her."

"Go to mamma, dear," said Marion, sweetly, as she set little Ruby down on the floor.

As the child ran away she turned deliberately towards Bert and just for a moment stood watching him closely.

Marion was more disturbed by Bert's actions than she would have cared to acknowledge.

"They haven't the remotest idea that we can see them," she said, nervously. "Please do me a favor, Alma. Go up to the dressing-room. I'm going over there this minute to interrupt that scene, and it will be less mortifying for them both if they think I am the only one who has seen them."

"I'm agreeable," laughed Miss Allyn. "I'm willing to let them down easy. If it was only Miss Ellis, now, I'd be perfectly satisfied."

She walked quietly in the opposite direction, while Marion started across the scene-room. She had almost reached the darkened corner, when something astonished her.

With a deliberate movement, Miss Chester put her arm on Bert's shoulder and attempted to draw his face down so that he might kiss her.

The next second Bert had slipped his hand up the loose sleeve of the soubrette's dress and grasped a bracelet that fairly scintillated with light, even in that semi-darkness.

There was a startled cry from the girl, and Marion darted forward.

The soubrette was struggling frantically, but Bert held both her wrists in a firm grasp.

"You had better send for Mr. Temple, Marion," he said, in a calm voice; "Miss Chester has got on the mate to your bracelet."

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER NOTE.

For just a second Marion hesitated; then she went swiftly forward.

"Let her go, Bert," she said, decidedly. "Don't try to hold her. Just take the bracelet away from her, and put it in your pocket."

"Shall we let her go scot-free?" asked Bert, in astonishment.

"I think so, yes," said Marion, after a minute. "We can easily replace her, and I don't wish to make her any trouble."

"But the girl is a thief," said Bert, plainly, as he let go of the soubrette's wrists. "You can see by her actions that she is guilty, Marion."

Miss Chester glared at them both, but did not speak. She was caught in a trap that she could not get out of.

"I could perhaps forgive her for stealing the bracelet," said Marion, soberly; "but her methods for winning a man's affection are inexcusable. No right-minded woman could overlook her deception in that direction."

"She wasn't deceiving me any," said Bert, in great amusement. "Thanks to my friend, Miss Ellis, I was on to her game, but I had a little one of my own to play."

"Here comes Mr. Temple now," said Marion, as she heard the manager's voice.

The next moment she had called him and was explaining the situation.

Mr. Temple looked at Miss Chester as Marion talked. The girl was growing more defiant and ugly every instant.

"I picked the thing up while the scuffle was going on," she said, carelessly; "and when I saw what it was, I kept it, of course. Miss Marlowe isn't the only girl in the world who is entitled to wear diamonds."

"Miss Marlowe would never have dreamed of wearing them; not these, at any rate," said Mr. Temple, severely. "In the first place, she is too much of a lady to accept gifts from strangers, and, further, there is no doubt in the world that these bracelets were stolen."

"That's why they wouldn't take it at the pawnshop; they guessed as much," went on the girl, recklessly. "Well, what are you going to do with me for keeping my findings? You'll have a beautiful job to get me punished!"

"We don't wish to punish you, Miss Chester," said Marion, gravely. "We shall be perfectly satisfied when we are rid of your society."

"Yes; you can go at once," said Mr. Temple, decidedly. "Miss Leslie can do your part and her own this evening. As for the 'two-weeks' clause in your contract, I will give you that much salary."

"Then I'm suited," said the girl, with a disdainful glance at Bert. "I'll be as glad as you are to part company, I can tell you!"

Mr. Temple waited until she was gone before he went back to the front of the house; but after the news was once told, no one spoke further on the subject. Miss Ellis looked happy when she appeared in the wings, and Marion noticed with great pleasure that she and Bert seemed very friendly.

The evening passed without any trouble, but with the audience as enthusiastic as ever over the genius of the actors.

Archie Ray and his sister were seated in a box, and Archie scanned the audience repeatedly, on the lookout for the masher, but the curtain fell without a sign of his presence.

"I guess he's given it up," said Bert, as he removed his eye from the peep-hole in the curtain, through which he had been watching the dispersing audience.

"Hello! There's something up!" called out Orrin Olcott, as he took Bert's place. "One of the ushers is having trouble with an ugly-looking fellow, and, yes, there's going to be a scrap! Come on through the boxes; I'm going, Jackson!"

He started on, with Bert at his heels; but before they reached the front of the house, the commotion was over.

Mr. Temple and two of the ushers, with a detective at their backs, were standing guard over their vanquished prisoner, a fellow who looked like anything from a red-handed rioter to a harmless peanut vender.

"He was determined to speak to Miss Marlowe," said one of the ushers. "Of course, he didn't have on any red rose, so we didn't arrest him. If he had gone out quietly with

the rest, there would not have been any trouble."

"What do you want with Miss Marlowe?" asked Mr. Temple, curiously. "State your message at once, or it will be the worse for you."

The fellow mumbled something in an unintelligible language, but finally succeeded in extracting a note from his pocket.

Mr. Temple read it, and gave a whistle of surprise.

"Jerusalem! The fellow says he has been here two evenings, but, because he knew he was being watched, he did not wear the red rose. He trusted to Miss Marlowe's heart to pick him out among the audience."

"Then this is not the fellow?" said the detective; "this is only another of his dupes, like the one we captured!"

"I give it up! You had better take him along, anyway, to be on the safe side," said Mr. Temple. "I'll make a complaint against him for disorderly conduct."

He handed the note to the detective, for him to study the handwriting, and, in a few minutes, the fellow was led away and the theatre was in darkness.

Mr. Temple went to his hotel, feeling greatly disturbed.

It was evident to him that the masher had not given up his project, and, just now, when the city was so filled with the blood-thirsty element, it was more than possible that he would carry out his intentions.

He glanced over the papers the next morning, to see if any fresh horrors had been committed, and found that there had been rioting all night, and that many people had been injured.

"We must be extra vigilant to-night," he said, as Dr. Brookes called upon him. "I am thankful it is our last night, and I mean that nothing shall happen. We've had good business so far, in spite of the disturbances in the city."

"We'll have a good house to-night, all right," said the doctor, as he opened his morning paper. "Miss Allyn's pen has done some good work. She's a daisy, I tell you, at writing catchy advertisements."

He folded the paper as he spoke, and pointed to a half column, with a scare head above it, that would have done credit to any printer.

"She's let it be known that Miss Marlowe's life has been threatened, but she hasn't lisped a word of any danger to the theatre!"

"And the people will all flock to see the beautiful girl whose fate rests in the hands of 'loon mashers,'" laughed Mr. Temple.

"They are sufficiently morbid to wish to gaze upon her face, knowing that there is a bare possibility of her being blown to atoms to-morrow!"

The doctor shuddered at his companion's words, although he understood perfectly the spirit in which they were spoken.

"It is a clever 'ad.,' but it gives me cold shivers," he said, honestly. "Miss Marlowe has been through so many hairbreadth escapes! God forbid that there is so much as a possibility of her going through another!"

"Amen to that!" murmured Mr. Temple, growing serious in a minute. "If there is anything dreadful to happen to Miss Marlowe, I hope that I may not live to see it."

Both men turned involuntarily, and a warm handclasp followed. They were united, heart and soul, in their regard for Marion.

CHAPTER X.

A CONFESSION.

When the actors assembled behind the scenes on the third night of their stay in Cleveland, there was not one of their number who was not a little nervous. Extra detectives had been hired, and every *attaché* was on his guard; yet there was a feeling among them all that something still might happen.

"Why, all that fellow has to do is change his clothes every night and omit the rose," said Miss Ellis, excitedly. "There's no one in the house that could pick him out. Oh, it gives me chills just to think about it."

"Well, I'm glad John is back on the door," broke in Miss Leslie. "He's on the warpath for those fellows now, and Mr. Temple tells me that one of the other men is to stay with him."

"Yes; his arm is not well yet," said Marion, softly. "Poor John, it will be a week or more before that wound stops paining him."

"Well, we're lucky to get off as we did," said Bert. "When a man with a pistol gets scared or rattled, it's the greatest wonder in the world that he don't shoot everything around him. By the way, Hinton, have you fixed the red light?" he asked, suddenly. "You know Deering decided to have a play of lights to-night. Miss Marlowe and little Kirby are to bask, during the fourth act, in a perfect rainbow of glory!"

"I've got all the colors," said Hinton, good-naturedly; "and the effect is bound to be beautiful, Jackson!"

"It couldn't help being! Isn't it going to shine on two beautiful stars! Why, it will be glorious, Hinton, if it only reflects back their lustre!"

"You're as bad off as ever, I believe," laughed Hinton. "You are still as true as steel to your first love, Jackson!"

Bert drew himself up proudly and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I should hope so," he said, quietly. "I'd have no respect for myself if I wasn't. The other girls are all right, but there's only one Marion Marlowe!"

"Do you really love her so much, Bert?" asked a soft voice at his shoulder.

Bert turned around quickly, and saw Miss Ellis.

He was about to reply jokingly, but a look at her face stopped him.

If ever he saw misery, Bert saw it there. In an instant the realization came to him that this girl really loved him. It was a revelation to the young man, and for a moment it confused him; then his sense of honor rose uppermost, and his voice was firm as he answered:

"I have loved Marion all my life! I shall always love her," he said, softly. "Of course, I expect to make many dear friends, but, as I said before, there can be only one Marion Marlowe."

Miss Ellis turned away with the tears in her eyes.

Bert looked after her sadly, but did not follow.

A moment later he was taking himself to task severely. He felt that unconsciously he had wronged the girl, yet never for a moment had he intended to deceive her.

"My first love affair," he muttered to himself, as he went toward his dressing-room. "Well, may the Saints preserve me from having another! A man can love and be disappointed and still bear it, but such an experience must be awful to a girl or a woman!"

"What are you mooning about, Bert?" asked a merry voice.

Bert had his hand on his door, but he turned quickly and answered:

"Marion, do women suffer more than men when they are in love? That's a serious question, and I want an honest answer."

"No, Bert, I don't think they do," said the young girl, with a blush, as a mental picture of Dr. Brookes rose suddenly before her. "Of course, it is all a matter of temperament. Some men and some women bear their sorrows bravely, hiding them from the world and even smiling, while others have no strength to conquer their grief. Such people pine away and die, and, oh, I do pity them!"

"Which would you do, Marion?" asked the youth, as he put his hand on her shoulder.

"I am sure I don't know," began the girl, still seriously. "I hope I would be brave and bear it nobly, but it is one of those things that no one can say. I must wait, Bert, until I am forced to the experiment!"

"Which I am sure you never will be," said Bert, decidedly; "every one loves you, Marion, and you love no one; *ergo*, every one will suffer, except yourself, and, to tell you the truth, that suits me perfectly!"

"Why, Bert! How unchristian!" began Marion, merrily.

Bert gave a quick glance around to see that no one was looking, then he drew her toward him and pressed a kiss on her temple.

"Not an hour should you suffer, if I could help it, dearie," he said, quietly; "but there's the first call! I had no idea it was so late!"

The young girl ran away, with something suspiciously like tears upon her lashes. Her old friend's tender words had stirred her very deeply.

"Second call!" cried the stage-manager, before she was half dressed. Marion hurried into her tasteful costume, while she rattled off a part of her dialogue.

"Dead letter perfect, as usual, Miss Marlowe," said Miss Ellis, putting her head in

at the door. "What a memory you have! And a good memory is so essential to a successful actress!"

Marion looked up quickly. The young girl's manner puzzled her. In a second she saw that Miss Ellis had been crying.

"What is it, dear? You must tell me," she said, softly, with her arm around the *ingénue's* waist.

Miss Ellis put her handkerchief to her face and burst out crying.

"Oh, I can't! I can't! I'd be ashamed to tell you!" she said, brokenly. "You'd despise me, Miss Marlowe, for being so weak and childish!"

"You know me better than that, girlie!" said Marion, soberly. "Do, please, tell me your trouble, and, perhaps, I can comfort you!"

To the young girl's intense astonishment, Miss Ellis burst out laughing. It was a hysterical laugh, in which tears were freely intermingled.

"It's too funny for anything, to think of your comforting me, Miss Marlowe! Why, I ought to hate you! We ought to hate each other! You see, Bert is dead in love with you, and—and—I love him, Miss Marlowe!"

Marion caught her breath with an astonished gasp, but at the same time the arm that was about her friend was drawn a little closer.

"It is funny, dear," she said, with a weak smile; "and I'm awfully, awfully sorry that I stand in the way of your happiness! But Bert is only a boy. Have patience, Miss Ellis. When he sees what a dear girl you are, I am sure he will love you!"

"Nonsense! He'd be a ninny to love me as long as you are around!" cried Miss Ellis, stoutly; then she turned to Marion and kissed her ardently.

"You are the noblest girl in the whole world, Marion Marlowe!" she cried, earnestly. "Why, I verily believe you would give up the man you loved rather than give any other woman the pain of seeing you marry him!"

"No, I wouldn't!" said Marion, stoutly. "No fear of my doing that! When I love a man truly, and he loves me, there is no woman or body of women who will keep me from marrying!"

They were interrupted by some one exclaiming: "Great Caesar's ghost! Do my ears deceive me? Or, were those really the words of Marion Marlowe?"

Miss Allyn stood in the doorway, all costumed for the stage. As she stared at Marion, she held up both hands in wonder.

"Last call! Quick, girls!' cried Mrs. Burnside, from her dressing-room.

The next second there was a rush to the wings by all hands, and the dreary dressing-rooms were temporarily deserted.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EXPLOSION.

As soon as Marion reached the stage she scanned the audience carefully. In the sea of faces she almost expected to discover a pair of hollow eyes glaring at her threateningly from over a red rose, and it was quite a relief to find that there was none.

Archie Ray and his sister smiled at her from a box, and, in a very few minutes, she had conquered her nervousness.

As she walked up the centre of the stage during the last half of the fourth act, Bert Jackson had occasion to pass her and offer her a parcel.

Marion could not quite restrain her sense of humor, and, as she was back to the audience, she whispered, softly:

"Do you guarantee the contents of this parcel, Bert? Can you swear it isn't a bomb or an infernal machine of some sort?"

Bert kept his face straight, and went on with his speech, while Marion handed the parcel to little Ruby, who was beside her.

"A few sweetmeats, darling," she was obliged to remark, and then once more she came down to the footlights to continue the dialogue. Little Ruby sat down on the floor, with the parcel in her lap. She was not to open it until a few minutes later.

As Bert left the stage, Marion went on with a short monologue; then a ray of calcium light shot across the stage, giving just a hint of what was coming.

The last scene was one in which a wronged but loving wife waited patiently for her hus-

band, holding her child in her arms, in a most pathetic manner.

It was a balcony scene, depicting twilight first, then both the moon and the *Aurora Borealis* suddenly lit the evening skies, their rays spreading and deepening in intensity, until the whole sky was luminous.

Marion moved a low rocker to the center of the balcony; then stepped to the edge, and stood gazing at the sky, with the first glimmer of the moonlight falling softly about her.

The effect was charming, and the audience sat breathless.

In her peerless beauty, the young girl looked almost angelic, and her white, filmy garments only enhanced the illusion.

Suddenly she turned half around and began humming a low tune; then, as her eye wandered to her child, she burst out into a strain of melody that held her hearers spell-bound.

It was Marion's first song since she left the opera company, and no one had even guessed that she was such a marvelous singer. As the notes rippled from her white throat, every opera-glass was turned upon her, and even the employees behind the scenes left their posts and crowded in the wings to listen.

When the song finally ended, there was a murmur of applause, but another display of calcium made them stare in wonder.

Marion walked slowly toward the rocking-chair, intending to seat herself; but, as she stood with one hand on the low chair, gazing out over the audience, she suddenly shivered with fear in every fibre of her being.

The colored lights were playing hide-and-seek in the sky above her head, and little Ruby was still sitting on the balcony floor, waiting for her cue, but Marion stood speechless, staring straight before her.

Suddenly Archie Ray leaned forward and followed the glance of her eyes.

A man, hollow-eyed and haggard, was seated in the front row of the orchestra. He was neatly dressed, and not especially conspicuous, but he was staring wildly at Marion, *and there was a red rose in his button-hole!"*

As the actress saw Mr. Ray leave the box with his sister, she came back to her senses. She must go on with the scene, no matter what it might cost her. There was no smile on her face as she looked at this fellow, for Marion had recognized him instantly as the one she had seen on the street corner, and she knew instinctively that he was the threatener.

She tried to seat herself naturally, but every movement was forced.

As she turned to speak to little Ruby, her tongue almost refused to obey her.

At last, with a mighty effort, she found her voice. It was merely to say to the child: "Come to mamma, darling!"

Little Ruby sprang to her feet, holding the parcel carelessly. The next instant it slipped from her grasp.

At that moment Marion leaped from her chair with a shriek that echoed through the building. The parcel would have fallen from the balcony to the stage if Marion had not caught it in the nick of time. Simultaneously with the shriek, however, there was a dull report from somewhere behind the scenes. Crash after crash followed, and the stage and all about it were enveloped in darkness.

The audience arose as one man, all shrieking and screaming, and for a moment it seemed that a panic was inevitable.

"The rioters! They have blown up the theatre!"

"Miss Marlowe has been killed!" yelled some one in the crowd, frantically.

"Be quiet, every one! There's no danger!" roared Mr. Temple's voice from the blackness of the stage.

"Sit still and avoid a panic! We'll light up in a second!" bawled Bert Jackson, from one of the boxes.

The crowd hesitated a moment, and the ushers made use of the time to crowd them back into their seats, while the detectives and extra policemen who were in the house made heroic efforts to quiet the audience.

No one could tell just what had happened, but all knew that it was an explosion of some kind. In that first fearful second they had caught a glimpse of the scenery as it came

toppling over, then the dust and smoke and darkness obscured the stage completely.

Suddenly a beautiful voice rang out of the darkness before them.

Marion Marlowe was still upon the stage, and had little Ruby in her arms; and, as they looked, a glow from the calcium outlined her face and form distinctly.

In an instant the house was quiet, and Marion's glorious voice rolled out in a song.

It was all that was needed to quiet her audience.

Throwing her head back bravely and holding little Ruby close to her breast, the heroic girl finished the pathetic scene grandly.

She had chosen "Home, Sweet Home," as the best possible song; and, as the last note died away the people sank into their seats, quieted.

The stage was not lighted again for fear that what might be disclosed would alarm the people; but the spot upon which Marion stood was as bright as day, and as she finished she smiled and kissed her hand to them.

A roar of applause shook the monstrous building.

That some dreadful deed had been done was plain to them all, but by her coolness the brave girl had helped to evade a panic; and, as the audience filed out quietly, there were many cheers for the beautiful heroine.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERY.

"Well, of all the scenes of desolation that I ever beheld!"

Bert Jackson spoke solemnly as he uttered the exclamation.

The drop-curtain, or what was left of it, had been safely lowered, and with every light turned on, the Temple Theatrical Company was investigating the extent of the damage.

"It might have been worse! Thank God no one was killed!" said Mr. Temple, gratefully. "But, oh, what a narrow escape for Miss Marlowe and little Ruby! Why, the stage is literally wrecked, and the scenery is in atoms!"

"The worst damage is out by the stage door, Mr. Temple," said an officer, coming up. "We've decided that the door was opened and the cartridge thrown in. We have found the fragments of the shell and fuse behind a pile of old timber."

"Yes, and the stage door is in splinters," cried Bob Hinton, excitedly; "there isn't a pane of glass left in any rear window of the building."

"But I don't understand John not being at his post," said Mr. Temple, looking around for the doorkeeper.

"It was the singing, Mr. Temple! I heard Miss Marlowe singing and left the door for a minute! I ought not to have done it, but it was a great temptation!"

"I don't blame you much, if that was it," said Mr. Temple, glancing at Marion, who was standing with Dr. Brookes at a little distance.

There was a commotion in the street, and Bert darted outside. In a minute he was back with some welcome information.

"They've got him! They've got him!" he shouted. "Come, quick, Mr. Temple! They want you to have a look at him!"

"Oh, I want to see him, too!" cried Marion, starting after them. "I want to be very sure that they have caught the right one!"

In an instant the whole company were grouped around two stalwart officers, who were standing just outside of the stage door with their prisoner between them.

"That's the fellow that brought the bouquet of roses!—the one who came in on your pass, Mr. Temple!" said Hinton, the moment he saw him.

"He's the fellow that threw the bomb, all right," said one of the officers. "We caught him a block away, just after the explosion."

"Hold on, gentlemen! Take a look at this chap, please!" called a voice in the darkness.

Archie Ray was coming toward them with his hand on a man's shoulder, and a score or more of small boys following at his heels and shouting derisively.

"I am sure that is the one," said Marion, to the doctor; "oh, don't let him escape! I am positive he is guilty!"

"But he was in the theatre at the time! I saw him," said Bert, who had overheard her.

"I know he was—I saw him, too! Never

theless, I am sure he is the one!" repeated Marion.

Archie Ray had been explaining to the officers and the crowd; and, as neither of the culprits made the slightest resistance, they were both led away to the station-house.

"It will be a week before the repairs can be made here," said the owner of the theatre, as he came out with one of the firemen. "A lucky thing that that cartridge spent most of its force on those iron stairs. If it had not struck just where it did there would have been lives lost, I reckon."

"Gee! It did damage enough!" cried Bert, who had been on a short tour of inspection. "It blew the moon out of the sky and tore up a whole forest on canvas, to say nothing of a big hole in the floor of the scene-room and a whole ocean of green waves ripped into a million pieces!"

"I thought the world had come to an end," said Miss Ellis, who had been both laughing and crying. "I was in my dressing-room, and of course I knew in a minute that it must be an explosion! I was sure Miss Marlowe was killed, and I nearly went crazy."

"I was at the head of the stairs, just coming down," began Miss Allyn, who was limping painfully. In an instant all eyes were turned upon her positively ghastly features.

"What in the world did you do?" gasped Marion, anxiously.

"Went back, to be sure, and I went with a vengeance," replied Miss Allyn, with a brave effort to smile. "Something hit me in my back and knocked me up against the dressing-room door, and, of course, that flew open and I landed in the corner!"

"Oh, Alma! You poor dear!" cried Marion, running over to her; "and to think I was on the stage and wasn't hurt an atom!"

"What made you shriek when Ruby let that box fall?" asked Mrs. Burnside, suddenly. "I was watching from the wings, and I couldn't understand it."

Marion's face turned a shade whiter as she recalled her emotion.

"Why, I had just discovered that fellow in the audience, and as I glanced at the parcel in her hands I seemed to forget what it really was! Instead of a fake property parcel, I seemed to think that it was something dangerous, and the next instant I screamed—I could not help it!"

"And then the explosion occurred! There is something strange about it!" said Dr. Brookes, thoughtfully. "Has anybody seen that parcel since, or was it lost in the confusion?"

"I have it here," said the property-man, coming forward. "I've been picking up the 'props' wherever I have seen them, but—hello! That isn't the property parcel at all! Here, Jackson, where the deuce is the parcel I gave you?"

"That's it," said Bert, taking a sharp look at the package. "I found it on the box just in reach of the left exit, exactly where it's been every night of our engagement."

The property man looked it over carefully.

"Some one has changed the parcel, or I'll eat my hat! Just hold on a minute till I see what's in it."

"Great Scott! Not here! Put it in soak, man!" yelled Bert. "Don't take any chances of another blow-up this evening!"

But the man had already untied the string. The next second he disclosed a tiny bottle containing some liquid. Dr. Brookes took it instantly and scrutinized it carefully.

"Well, what is it, doc?" asked Bert, who was beginning to turn pale. "I handed it to Marion, so for Heaven's sake, don't say it is an explosive!"

"That's exactly what it is! It is nitroglycerine," said the doctor, grimly. "Here, officer, you had better take possession of it; but look sharp, man, and don't drop it!"

"Here's a note for you, Miss Marlowe. The prisoner begged me to give it to you," cried Olcott, coming in. "I went to the station-house with the gang, and they let him write it there. He's the right chap, all right! He admits it in his letter!"

Dr. Brookes opened the letter and read it aloud. The handwriting was familiar to almost the entire company.

"The Red Rose has failed—dynamite has failed; but vengeance goes on, on, on forever."

There was no signature to the missive, but none was needed. The note had been written by the crazy masher.

The next day there was less rioting and

bloodshed in the city, and the police attributed this in great degree to the fact that they now had three dangerous malefactors safely in their clutches. No threats were needed to get the matter straight, for the real culprit promptly confessed his plot and identified his accomplices. They were all half-witted foreigners, whose brains had been turned by the conditions existing in the city of Cleveland; but one, the fellow with the hollow eyes and the red rose in his buttonhole, had complicated matters by mixing love affairs with bloodshed. Why he selected Miss Marlowe no one ever knew, but it was probable that he saw her and was smitten by her beauty.

Before the Temple Theatrical Company left the city they found the owners of the bracelets. They had been stolen a month before and all trace of them lost.

Every member of the company was glad to leave the scene of so much excitement, but it was days before they quite recovered from the horror of the explosion.

Everything had been explained except the changing of the package; but, although a hundred theories were put forward, not one was conclusive—there were no proofs forthcoming to explain how it was done, so this detail of the tragedy remained a mystery.

At the depot Marion Marlowe was cheered by an enthusiastic throng. She had gained their admiration by her sweetness and genius, but her heroic conduct at that thrilling moment of that awful night had won their honest affection.

THE END.

Marion's next appearance was to be in Columbus. After the terrifying experiences she had just been through she and the Temple Theatrical Company looked forward to a season of comparative quiet. An unexpected incident led to a series of developments that were to keep the company on the *qui vive* for some time to come. What these developments were will be told in next week's MY QUEEN (No. 17), in a story entitled, "Marion Marlowe in Columbus; or, Accused of a Crime."

PATTERN COLUMN.

By special arrangements with the manufacturers we are enabled to supply the readers of MY QUEEN with the patterns of all garments described or illustrated in this column at TEN CENTS each. Address, "Pattern Column," MY QUEEN, 238 William Street, New York City.

☞ *In ordering patterns be sure to give size and number.*

FASHION NOTES.

Scarlet and gold in combination gives a military touch to many a costume this season, but it is almost exclusively reserved for young women. The latest street glove is of heavy skin, fastened with one large pearl stud. Sometimes gold studs are used.

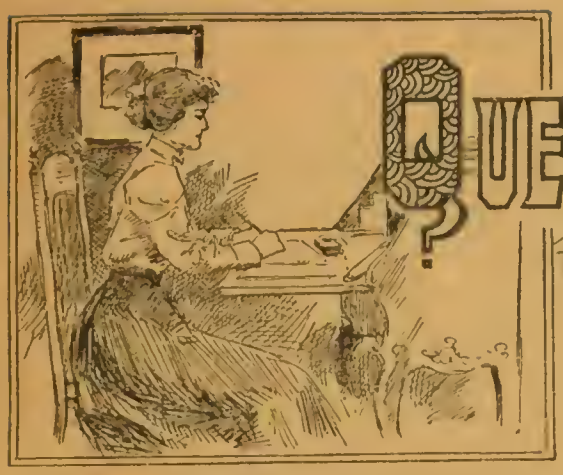
Reversible satins are used extensively on winter hats, and for linings, facings, draperies, choux tea-gowns, accordion-pleated petticoats, foundations for lace and velvet opera wraps, etc. Among the two-toned effects are green and gold, black and gold, violet and old rose color, orange and azurine, petuina and reseda, and bright cherry red and black.

NO. 2,369—MISSES' FANCY WAIST.

Mohair in pastel shades is the latest Paris whim for fancy waists In this design pale coral pink mohair is used with cream all-over lace This waist is very stylish and withal quite simple to make Flannel, serge, poplin, mohair and other light-weight woolens are used for making this waist. The pattern is cut in sizes 12, 14 and 16 years. Size 14 years requires three yards of 21-inch or one and seven-eighths yards of 42-inch material As shown, one and three-eighths yards of 32-inch, with one and one-eighth yards of allover and one and one-half yards of applique trimming

No. 2368—LADIES' TUCKED SHIRT WAIST.

This style of waist is partienlarly smart in silk or fine wool fabrics. A trimming strap, shaped to effect a three-pointed yoke, is stitched on the front just above the termination of the tucks. This trimming piece may be of the material stitched, or of insertion, or of applique trimming, or it may be omitted. Nun's veiling, cashmere, vienna, flannel, mohair, taffeta, or satin would make pretty waists in this style. The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 42 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires 3 1-2 yards of 21-inch, or 2 1-8 yards of 42-inch material.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department is a special feature of this publication, and it will be appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers. It is conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, has become well known. Readers of "MY QUEEN" need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and will never refuse her assistance or sympathy. As all letters are answered only through the columns of "MY QUEEN," it is unnecessary to enclose stamps. STREET & SMITH.

"I have been engaged for seven years and I don't seem to be any nearer marriage than I was when I began. My fiance has a fair position, but he keeps saying that he cannot give me what I ought to have, and our wedding-day has been put off and put off until I am tired of the whole thing. I am not tired of him—in fact, I love him dearly, and I would live with him happily to-morrow if he would only say the word and give me the chance. Please advise me what to do. Shall I break the engagement? DORIS B. S."

Your fiance possibly thinks that you require more than you really desire. If so, talk to him plainly and convince him of his error.

If you are willing to economize and do without luxuries in order to enjoy his society, he certainly ought to be willing to do so.

We do not believe in such long engagements as this, and if your other arguments fail, would advise your telling him that you do not propose to sacrifice any more of the years of your youth, and that if he is not ready now to fulfil his promise that you prefer that the compact be canceled. As soon as he sees a prospect of losing you he will probably be anxious to marry you at once.

"Can you tell me what I should do in my awful predicament? I am a great dancer and just because I danced with a man that my lover doesn't like he has gone off mad and will not even write to me. I love him with all my heart, but what can I do? I won't tell him that I love him or that I want him to come back, and I do not know any other way to get him to forgive me. LIZZIE B. C."

Your lover will probably come back to you after his anger has cooled. You should not have let your love for dancing run away with your good judgment. Many a man dislikes to see the girl he loves in the arms of another, even though it be only in a waltz in the presence of others. Why not write him a kind letter and say that you are sorry you hurt his feelings and that you did not do it in order to wound him. Such a note would be dignified, and yet tender and womanly. If you really love him do not let false pride govern your actions. Perhaps by being humble yourself, you may shame him out of his temper.

"I have had an experience with a young gentleman and would like your advice. He has asked me to go out driving several times and has taken me to theatres and been very pleasant. I like his company very much, but I cannot say I am in love with him, though he has asked me to marry him. I am nineteen. Do you not think a girl ought to be married at that age? I should like to very much. I do not know of any other young gentleman that I like better. I have traveled abroad a great deal and have not found any others. ARDELLA V."

At the age of nineteen a girl should be just about completing her studies. After that, there is plenty of time to think of marriage, if one is really in love. We do not advise you to marry for the sake of marrying, as too many girls have tried that to their sorrow. Wait until you are truly in love with some manly, noble fellow, whose love is necessary to the full development of your character. We would advise you to take up a course of reading and you would do well to look after your spelling and chirography a little.

"I am a mother and have daughters growing up, who, like most girls, are great readers of fiction. I have noticed of late that they have been reading 'My Queen,' and, naturally, I have read it myself. As a mother, I wish to thank you for the wholesome advice you give in your correspondence department, and, I believe, if all mothers kept 'My Queen' on hand for their daughters to read that many young girls would be greatly benefited. I shall look for each issue and wish you much success. A MOTHER."

We thank you for your words of appreciation. It is the aim of Messrs. Street & Smith to place good, pure stories in the hands of the young, and, in the "My Queen" series the publishers think they have succeeded admirably. While it is impossible to write a story which will appeal to our readers without portraying the evils in the human nature, still, we mean to publish those in which virtue triumphs, and this is probably why the Marion Marlowe stories meet the approval of good mothers. We do not think you will ever be disappointed in this series, and the same firm stand for morality will be found in each effort of this publishing house, as can be learned by reading some of its ten-cent libraries

"I have been married for two years to a dear little woman who I have discovered is devoid of sentiment. She seems unable to give me the few kind words that a man yearns for when he is in trouble. She is an excellent wife otherwise, but I would like to cultivate a little affection in her disposition, if I could. Can you tell me how to go about it? HENRY B. R."

It is strange that it has taken you so long to discover what is lacking in your wife's nature. We cannot understand why you did not see this before marriage. If your wife is born without these qualities, we fear that it will be impossible for her to cultivate them. We would advise you to be very kind, indeed, to her, but not over-affectionate. If she is a right-minded woman, she will reciprocate your kindnesses, and the affection you desire may perhaps follow. If you are too lavish with your own affection, she will naturally become somewhat careless of it. No one values much that of which they have an overabundance.

"I am in deep trouble, but I am sure that you, dear Miss Shirley, will help me. I had a quarrel with my fiance a month ago, and have not seen him since. I have been simply miserable and would give anything to have him back if he would only let me know in some way that he wants to come. Do you think I would make a mistake in writing to him and telling him I was sorry? MADGE V."

Perhaps your fiance is just as stubborn as you are, and is as anxious to see you as you are to see him. If you were in the wrong, by all means be womanly enough to write him and say so. There is no glory in "sticking out" a foolish quarrel. If you disagreed over some trivial thing that does not now possess any importance, you might write him a courteous little note and say that you will be at home on a certain evening and would be pleased to have him call. Do not go any further than this, and do not re-hash the old quarrel, but start fresh and try to avoid any such unpleasantness in the future.

"You will see in No. 7 of 'My Queen,' a letter from Ella P. I would like to ask her a few questions, so will you please send me her address and greatly oblige, MISS O. IBERG."

We are unable to comply with your request, as it is against the rules of the house to disclose the addresses of our correspondents.

"I am twenty two, and I am in love with a handsome girl of twenty. I spend my time at the opera and in the ice cream parlor with her. She says she loves me, but I do not know whether to believe her. I want her for my wife, but I am afraid to ask her as I am afraid she will refuse, and I will lose it all. Please advise me what to do. CHARLES B."

"Faint heart ne'er won fair lady." How do you expect to make her your wife if you do not ask her? We would advise you in all kindness to spend less time at operas and ice cream parlors and try to improve the time thus gained by learning to write and spell better.

"Through your weekly journal, 'My Queen,' I would like to make the acquaintance of Miss Ella P. I am a young man seventeen years of age, and hold a very good position as book-keeper, with a very good salary. If she would like a true lover I think she would be pleased with my acquaintance. C. H. J."

You cannot have been a very careful reader of "My Queen," or of the Correspondence Department, if you fancy that we are running a matrimonial bureau. Our aim is to advise all who write to us to the very best of our ability, and we would hardly commit the atrocious error of introducing two young people whom we have never met, and whom we have no right whatever to take under our chaperonage. You ought to be able to make the acquaintance of as many nice girls as you desire, without resorting to such methods for procuring acquaintances.

"I have read every number of 'My Queen,' and have enjoyed them immensely. I think Marion is the sweetest girl that ever lived. If only I could have been like her! I am sixteen years old and have been married a year to a young man whom I thought was a nice man and whom I now find to be a bad character indeed. There is another whom I worship. Can you give me any advice? I am sure you can, for you are wise and sympathetic. LAURA M."

Poor child! You are one more victim of the "marry in haste" order! When you should have been in school or playing with your dolls you enter into an alliance which few women under twenty-five are fitted to enter, and now you have awakened to the shame and dishonor of such a position. Now listen, poor little child-wife, and do exactly as I say. Put the thought of every other man promptly out of your heart and try, try, try to win the love and respect of your husband! Do not leave a stone unturned to reform him, and, after you have done this and failed, it will be time for you to pursue some other method. Always remember that you are as much to blame as he is. When your soul revolts against him do not live with him as a wife another day, but always remember that marriage vows are sacred. Have you no mother or father to direct you in this matter?

"I am a young girl seventeen years old. I am at the present time going with two gentlemen one is forty years old and very wealthy. The other is nineteen, but has to work for a living. I am undecided which to take. Now, which do you think I would be the happiest with?

"M. L. B."

As you are in doubt, we advise you to marry neither of your suitors. Also, as you say nothing of love, we take it for granted that you have not yet experienced that feeling. You are too young to marry any one. If you marry a man for the sake of marrying, which seems to us to be your only motive, you will probably live to repent it bitterly.

"My friends and I have read with interest the seven books of Marion Marlowe's career. It seems as though for a girl of her years and discretion, she does not profit from her experiences. When she has learned that such traps are set for girls, how is it wise to continue to fall into these traps, for the purpose of exhibiting her bravery and purity?

"Would you advise all brave, strong-minded girls to do the same, that they might tell of their wonderful escapades and receive notice, in the daily papers, as heroines? Do you think Marion makes very judicious use of her money, when at any request, even from strangers, she gives so liberally and freely? It seems to me that she ought to make inquiries into the motives of her 'dear friends' before being so anxious to aid them. A girl so readily influenced into all sorts of 'charitable acts' I should call 'easy.' Do you think it wise that a young girl marry a man with whom she has only a few months' acquaintanee, as did Dollie?

"Do you believe that love is 'an itching around the heart?'

"Do couples have any more rights after an engagement, and before marriage, than they had before their engagement? AROLF B. H."

Kindly allow me to give you, as briefly as possible, an idea of the character of Marion Marlowe. Marion is a country girl. She is young, inexperienced, unsophisticated, even "green," as many, many a girl has been when she first reached the city. The little she knows of human nature and the world at large has been learned on her father's farm, and, until she meets Emile Vorse at the Grand Central Station, she has been entirely unacquainted with personal treachery. It is not easy for a young girl of her temperament to distrust, and Marion is "bitten" many times before she learns to be cautious.

Furthermore, all readers of "My Queen" must certainly understand that in "Marion Marlowe" is the embodiment of a composite nature. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young people will read her career, and many will find in her something that appeals to their individual natures or to their individual experiences. In order to be a companion to all, she must share the sorrows and pleasures of all, and, if she is unwise at times, it is because she is not perfect. No one is. If she is brave you will not find fault with her, and if she is "easy," it is because others have suffered from the same fault, and Marion does not claim superiority over all.

To answer another question, we can only say that "marriage is a lottery." As good marriages have been contracted in weeks as in months. There is no rule that can be applied to the length or shortness of engagements.

We believe that love is the purest, holiest sentiment there is, but we know nothing of the physical condition which you designate in your letter.

A man and woman who are engaged to be married have the right to be loyal and true to each other, to respect and honor each other and to, in a great measure, monopolize each other's society. All this is greatly modified before an engagement and intensified after marriage. I shall always be pleased with candid, respectful criticism, and shall do my best to answer proper questions.

"I have read much of your advice to young girls, so I am going to ask you for some advice. I am just seventeen years old and have been asked to marry a young man. I think I love him, but papa thinks I am too young, and ma don't, so I wish you would please advise me soon.

"TINAS D."

I agree with your father entirely. You are far too young to marry. By all means, wait a year, at least. I think you will have no difficulty in talking your mother over to your father's way of thinking as she cannot possibly be in such a hurry to lose you.

"I have brown eyes and light hair, and I want you to tell me something that would make my eyebrows and eyelashes heavy. Also if such a thing is possible, please tell me how to make my hands smaller or how to keep them white when you wash dishes. A. J."

Rub a little vaseline on your eyebrows and eyelashes every night. This is said to be very beneficial. A little glycerine and rose water on the hands, immediately after washing, is an excellent remedy for the roughness and redness which follows dish washing. We know of nothing that will reduce the size of the hands which nature has given us.

"I am very much worried and would like to have your kind advice. I go real often to the theatre and go behind the scenes after the opera, and there I made the acquaintance of an actor with whom I fell in love, and he soon after asked me to marry him and run away.

"I do not think it is right, is it? FANNIE S."

The man who asks you to "run away," as you express it, is not a desirable man for you to know. We advise you to drop the acquaintance of the actor at once. Have you no parents or sisters or brothers? If you have, pray go to them and let them settle with the actor.

"I had a lover whom I had been going with for quite a while and who wanted me to marry him. I always thought I loved him till a while ago, when I met another fellow whom I thought I liked better. I told my lover I did not want him any more, so he stopped coming to my house, and now I find that I love him best, and I have written him a letter telling him if he will forgive me to call on me a certain night. He did not call, but I think he still loves me. He is very sensitive. Please advise me what to do, and tell me if I did wrong to write that letter.

"MARGIE."

We do not blame you for writing the letter, neither do we blame your old lover for not coming back. No man who respects himself cares to come and go at the beck and call of a fickle sweetheart. If your old lover does come back to you, we trust you will not falter in your decision again. There is no virtue in love if it is not loyal.

"Being a close reader of 'My Queen' since the first issue, and admiring the general 'make-up' of the story, I could not refrain from reading your laudable correspondence columns. In the perusal of these columns I found much that was interesting in the queries, and in your answers I found instruction, and coming as it does from one who must have been and is a close and observing student of human nature, and whose heart's door is ever open to the pleas of her troubled sisters (and brothers, too), it should bear good fruit. In No. 5 I read queries from 'Mamie' and 'C. V. S.,' and I thought for the benefit of those similarly situated I would outline my experience along those lines. With the sanction of my wife, I proceed. Whatever may be the fate of my letter, here's success and long life to Miss Shirley and 'My Queen.' I flatter myself that I must have pleaded well, for I won my case and my bride. Four years ago we were married, she giving up a home of luxury and ease to assume the duties and cares of a poor man's home with the love of an honest heart as the only alluring star. During the four years not one word of discord has been heard in our home. Harmony prevails, for perfect love and confidence abides with us. On hearing Mamie's query my wife remarked, 'I would never wish for your parents to live elsewhere, as I am happy with them, and the little things I do for them are but pleasures.' 'C. V. S.' asks, 'Is marriage a failure?' 'Not with me. I am perfectly happy and contented with my lot,' was the reply. My parents, on being questioned remarked that their 'fondest imagination never pictured so happy a berth for their declining years as the one they have with their son and daughter.' Our little son, fourteen months old, is the light of our home, and one can see by one look into his face that marriage is not a failure. I am twenty-five years of age, and for the past ten years have had to 'hustle' for a living. About five years ago I met a young lady whom I immediately fell in love with. She had been reared in the lap of luxury, in the home of a millionaire. For a time I had no idea that my affection was reciprocated, but gradually it dawned upon my mind that I was not distasteful to her. At last I presented my case to my adored, telling her at the same time exactly how I was situated, financially and otherwise. My parents, both of whom were three-score years and ten, were to have a home with me, as they had abundantly cared for me when I was unable to care for myself, and it was now my turn to care for them and smooth down the rough places along their pathway. I earn but $15 per week, and pay $100 per year for a six-room cottage. We have good food on the table and more in the pantry and cellar—wear good clothes, carry $5,000 life insurance to protect my loved ones in case of accident, and yet lay up something each week for a rainy day, and in about two years will own our own home. No, marriage is not a failure! If the happy marriages were quoted as often as the unhappy ones the latter would be far in the minority. We hear evil reports quicker than good. Some fear to tell of their happiness for fear of being called "spoony," but I am happy and don't care who knows it. Wife and I are sweethearts ever, and my home is the nearest approach to heaven that I expect to attain on this earth. MARTIN."

This letter comes like a refreshing breath over the parched waste strewn with the wrecks of human ambition. We congratulate you upon having secured such a noble wife and again upon the ideal life which you seem to be living. You were very kind, indeed, to tell us of your happiness, and, if only our readers will all follow your example of thrift and loyalty, they cannot help being greatly benefited. It is a luxury to hear from one young man of your age that is free from pessimism and morbidness. We hope and believe that there are many more such happy families, but, as you say in your letter, we do not often hear of them, and the tales we do hear fill us with anxiety and sorrow. The perfect marriage is the ideal existence, and we believe this condition is possible to all. When misery encamps upon the hearthstone one or the other, or both, are responsible. We are glad you like the "My Queen" series, and your words of praise of the editor are sincerely appreciated. May your happiness never be less.

"I am in love with a young man whom I used to think cared a good deal for me. He moved to a distant city three months ago, and we corresponded regularly. He has not answered my last two letters. Would you write again? I think he never got them. LIZZIE K."

There is, of coures, a chance that the young man is ill or that he went out of town suddenly and has not received your letters. In this event, he will get them before long and will answer them. If he has simply become tired of the correspondence, you certainly do not want to spend your time writing letters which are not appreciated. We would not advise you to write again. If he values your acquaintance he will find some way to communicate with you before long. Do not waste any thought or affection on a man who does not value it.

"I am a young girl of fifteen. Will you please tell me what a fellow means when he says, 'I will knock a girl silly?' I am engaged to a fellow, but do you think I ought to marry him? He is a poor fellow without any parents or work.

"ADELINE."

We do not know what is meant by the term you mention, but should judge that the person who uses such phrases was a very objectionable individual. No, we do not advise you to marry the young man you speak of, nor any other man, until you are many years older.

"I am twenty years old and have been married two years and have a pair of twins. My husband is tired of me, and will not stay at home nights, but I love him dearly. Please let me know how I can win his affections back. E. M. B."

We can only advise you to be kind and gentle with your husband and do all in your power to make home attractive to him. Do not "nag" him about his neglect, but talk to him kindly. If he persists in neglecting you, we think it will be greatly your fault, as nearly all men love a pretty, peaceful home, especially when it is graced with a loving wife and pretty babies. Let us know how the experiment succeeds.

"I am a young girl of seventeen and I am engaged to a young man whom I do not love, but who is very much attached to me. My parents think it best that I should marry him. I attend the High School, and I would rather finish my education and wait until I am older that I may decide for myself. Kindly advise me.

"HELEN N."

As it is you who are to live with the young man and not your parents, we certainly think you should do the deciding. On no account allow yourself to be forced into a marriage which is objectionable to you, as unhappy marriages are one of the world's most prolific sources of misery. Finish your education, by all means.

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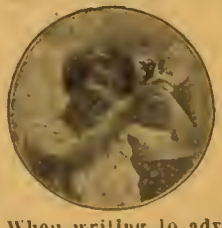

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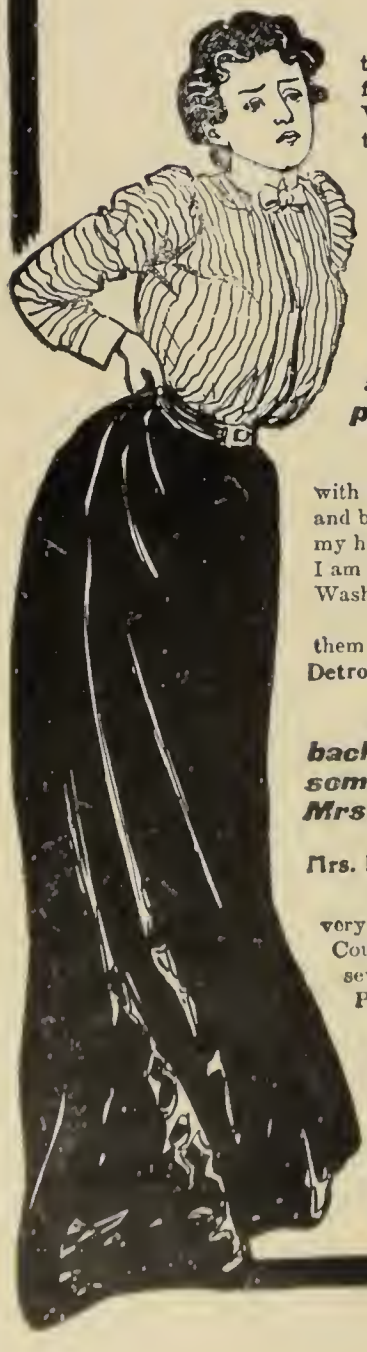
"MY BACK ACHED FOR 10 WEARY YEARS.

"Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Cured me Absolutely.



"I had female weakness, and the torture and pain I suffered no tongue can tell. I never spent one week in the ten years that I was free from pain. My trouble was inflammation and congestion of the womb. When I commenced to take your remedy I had been bedfast for some time under the treatment of two of the best physicians in Illinois without receiving any help. You can imagine the benefit I derived from Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound when I tell you that I have gained forty pounds and am well—a thing that I never dared to expect.' — **Mrs. C. E. Foland, Monett, Mo.**

Backache is a forerunner and one of the most common symptoms of Kidney trouble and womb displacement, which are invariably prevented and cured by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Read Miss Stevenson's letter:

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—Your Vegetable Compound has worked wonders with me. I was a great sufferer with ulceration of the womb, had such backaches and bearing-down pains that it required a great effort to do a small amount of my household duties. Since taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, I am able to do all my own work and feel like a new woman. Your Sanative Wash also is something I could not afford to be without.

"I cannot say enough in behalf of your remedies. I heartily recommend them to all suffering women."—**Mrs. F. C. Bazley, 724 Fourth Avenue, Detroit, Mich.**

Don't make the mistake of trying to overcome backache by heroic endurance. There is always something serious causing this trouble. Write to Mrs. Pinkham about it. Her address is Lynn, Mass.

Mrs. Henry Galteau, 1825 Charles St., La Crosse, Wis., writes:

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—When I first wrote to you for advice I was in a very bad condition with falling of the womb, backache and bearing down. Could not stand five minutes. I followed your advice strictly and have used seven bottles of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, two of Blood Purifier and four packages of Sanative Wash and am now perfectly well."

LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND CURES BACKACHE.

$5000 REWARD Owing to the fact that some skeptical people have from time to time questioned the genuineness of the testimonial letters we are constantly publishing, we have deposited with the National City Bank, of Lynn, Mass., $5,000, which will be paid to any person who will show that the above testimonials are not genuine, or were published before obtaining the writers' special permission.—LYDIA E. PINKHAM MEDICINE CO., Lynn, Mass.